



April 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 2006

# Interstate 81 Tolling Application

**PUBLIC HEARINGS**

**INTERSTATE 81 DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.**

## **Q: WHY ARE TOLLS BEING CONSIDERED?**

A: Major improvements cannot be made to Interstate 81 without additional funding. Tolling is a funding option. Federal law allows states to apply for tolling existing interstates for reconstruction. VDOT applied to the Federal Highway Administration for tolling I-81, but no decisions have yet been made.

## **Q: WHO WILL MAKE THE DECISION ABOUT TOLLING I-81?**

A: In Virginia, the Commonwealth Transportation Board decides on collecting tolls and setting toll rates. Under Title 33 of the Code of Virginia, the CTB has multiple general powers, which include “Fix and collect tolls and other charges for the use of such projects or to refinance the cost of such projects.” VDOT is gathering public input about tolling I-81, so members of the transportation board can consider public opinion as they make decisions about the future of I-81.

## **Q: HOW MUCH WILL TOLLS COST?**

A: We don’t yet know the answer because no decision has been made about what needs to be done to I-81. Toll amounts could vary depending on the cost of improvements that may be selected. Decisions about what needs to be done to I-81 and setting toll rates are up to the Commonwealth Transportation Board.

## **Q: WILL ALL I-81 DRIVERS PAY TOLLS?**

A: Under current Virginia law, only trucks on I-81 can be tolled. Should the law be changed, then other vehicles also could be tolled.

## **Q: WHEN WOULD TOLLS START?**

A: The Commonwealth Transportation Board hasn’t yet made a decision, but the earliest tolling could start would be after additional environmental work is completed on a particular section. Sections are identified in the Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement that was developed by the Virginia Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration. Specific sections for subsequent Tier 2 study and possible tolling would be prioritized by the Commonwealth Transportation Board. (See [www.I-81.org](http://www.I-81.org) for the Tier 1 DEIS or visit headquarters libraries along the I-81 corridor. Free CDs are available at VDOT offices.)

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**Q: WON'T TOLL BOOTHS SLOW DOWN TRAFFIC?**

A: In all likelihood, I-81 would not have toll booths. Most tolls are collected electronically so that drivers don't have to stop and start or fumble for coins. Technology has created cashless systems such as E-Z Pass that allow drivers to use toll roads in Virginia as well as other states.

**Q: IF I-81 HAS TOLLS, THEN DRIVERS WILL USE OTHER ROADS.  
HAVE YOU LOOKED AT THE EFFECT OF TOLLS ON OTHER ROADS?**

A: Yes, in general. The possibility that traffic will divert to Route 11 is studied in the I-81 Tier 1 DEIS. The study shows that the amount of traffic going to Route 11 would be low; therefore, the use of tolls as a funding option is feasible.

The study also shows that with or without tolls, over time traffic will increase on I-81 and on Route 11. If no improvements are made to I-81 as traffic continues to grow, then some traffic will seek less crowded roads, such as Route 11. Once Route 11 is crowded, and if improvements are made to I-81 and tolls are charged, then traffic will pay tolls to use an improved I-81.

Detailed traffic and revenue analyses will be needed to determine more specific impacts to other roads, and those analyses could be performed on individual sections of I-81 in Tier 2 environmental studies.

**Q: DOES THE NEW FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION LEGISLATION,  
SAFETEA-LU, AFFECT VDOT'S TOLLING APPLICATION?**

A: No. Virginia may proceed with its application to toll I-81 under a pilot program.

**Q: IF A PRIVATE OPERATOR BUILDS I-81, CAN IT CHARGE TOLLS?**

A: Virginia's Public-Private Transportation Act of 1995 provides powers and duties to a private entity to develop and/or operate transportation facilities and impose user fees, given the necessary federal, state and/or local approvals.

**Q: WILL TOLLS EVER BE LIFTED?**

A: That would be up to the CTB. Under the Code of Virginia, members of the board also have authority to remove tolls from a project once bonds and interest have been repaid. However, the CTB may continue tolling for maintenance, repair, operations, reconstruction and to meet other long-term obligations. Federal requirements say any I-81 toll revenue has to be used in the corridor.

**Q: CAN TOLLS PAY FOR RAILROAD IMPROVEMENTS?**

A: No. Federal guidelines say tolls have to be used on the facility where they are collected.